

Authentic Indian Butter Chicken Recipe



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Butter chicken, or Murgh Makhani, is a beloved dish that originates from the Indian subcontinent. This rich, creamy, and flavorful dish is made with tender pieces of chicken marinated in aromatic spices and cooked in a smooth tomato-based gravy enriched with butter and cream. It has become a staple in Indian cuisine and is enjoyed by food lovers around the world. In this article, we will explore the history of butter chicken, the essential ingredients, the step-by-step cooking process, and tips for achieving

the perfect dish.

History of Butter Chicken

Butter chicken was first developed in the 1950s at the Moti Mahal restaurant in Delhi, India. The dish was created by the restaurant's founders, who wanted to utilize leftover chicken from the tandoor (clay oven). They combined the leftover chicken with a tomato-based sauce that included butter and cream, creating a dish that was not only delicious but also helped reduce food waste. Since then, butter chicken has gained immense popularity, becoming a symbol of Indian cuisine around the globe.

Essential Ingredients

To prepare authentic Indian butter chicken, you'll need the following ingredients:

For the Chicken Marinade:

- 500 grams of boneless chicken thighs or breasts (cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 1 cup of plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons of lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons of ginger-garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon of red chili powder (adjust according to your spice preference)
- 1 teaspoon of garam masala
- 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder
- Salt to taste

For the Butter Chicken Gravy:

- 3 tablespoons of ghee or unsalted butter
- 1 large onion (finely chopped)
- 2-3 green chilies (slit lengthwise, optional)
- 1 tablespoon of ginger-garlic paste
- 1 can (400 grams) of crushed tomatoes (or 5-6 ripe tomatoes, pureed)
- 1 teaspoon of red chili powder
- 1 teaspoon of garam masala
- 1 teaspoon of sugar (to balance acidity)
- 1 cup of heavy cream
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves (for garnishing)

Step-by-Step Cooking Process

Now that we have our ingredients ready, let's dive into the cooking process. This recipe is divided into two main parts: marinating the chicken and preparing the gravy.

Part 1: Marinating the Chicken

1. Prepare the Marinade:

- In a large mixing bowl, combine the plain yogurt, lemon juice, ginger-garlic paste, red chili powder, garam masala, turmeric powder, and salt. Mix well to create a smooth marinade.

2. Marinate the Chicken:

- Add the chicken pieces to the marinade, ensuring they are well coated. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. For the best flavor, marinate the chicken overnight if possible.

Part 2: Cooking Butter Chicken

1. Cook the Chicken:

- Preheat your oven to 200°C (392°F) or prepare a grill or tandoor.
- Thread the marinated chicken pieces onto skewers if using the oven or grill. If using a frying pan, skip this step.
- Cook the chicken for about 15-20 minutes, turning occasionally, until fully cooked and slightly charred. Remove from heat and set aside. If using a frying pan, you can cook the chicken directly without skewers.

2. Prepare the Gravy:

- In a large pan, heat the ghee or unsalted butter over medium heat.
- Add the finely chopped onions and sauté until they turn golden brown.
- Stir in the slit green chilies and ginger-garlic paste. Cook for another minute until fragrant.
- Add the crushed tomatoes and cook for about 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens and the oil begins to separate from the tomatoes.

3. Add Spices and Cream:

- Stir in the red chili powder, garam masala, and sugar. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes.
- Lower the heat and add the heavy cream. Mix well until the gravy is smooth and creamy. Adjust salt to taste.

4. Combine Chicken and Gravy:

- Add the cooked chicken pieces to the gravy, ensuring they are well coated. Simmer for another 5-10 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

5. Garnish and Serve:

- Garnish the butter chicken with fresh coriander leaves. Serve hot with naan, roti, or steamed basmati rice.

Tips for the Perfect Butter Chicken

- **Use Bone-in Chicken:** If you prefer, you can use bone-in chicken pieces for added flavor. Just adjust the cooking time accordingly.
- **Marination Time:** The longer you marinate the chicken, the more flavorful it becomes. Overnight marination is ideal.
- **Tomatoes:** For the best flavor, use fresh, ripe tomatoes when pureeing. Alternatively, canned tomatoes work well for convenience.
- **Creaminess:** Adjust the amount of cream based on your preference for richness. You can also use coconut milk for a dairy-free version.
- **Serving Suggestions:** Butter chicken is traditionally served with naan or rice. You can also pair it with side dishes like raita (yogurt sauce) or a simple salad.

Variations of Butter Chicken

While the traditional recipe for butter chicken is beloved, there are several variations that you can try to add a unique twist to the dish:

1. **Paneer Butter Masala:** Replace the chicken with paneer (Indian cottage cheese) for a vegetarian option.
2. **Butter Chicken Pizza:** Use butter chicken as a topping for pizza, combining Indian flavors with Italian cuisine.
3. **Butter Chicken Pasta:** Toss cooked pasta in a butter chicken sauce for a fusion dish that's sure to

impress.

4. Butter Chicken Tacos: Serve butter chicken in taco shells with fresh vegetables and yogurt sauce for a fun twist.

Conclusion

Authentic Indian butter chicken is more than just a meal; it's an experience that brings people together around the table. Its rich flavors, creamy texture, and aromatic spices make it a perfect dish for special occasions or a cozy family dinner. By following this recipe and tips, you can recreate this iconic dish in your kitchen, impressing your family and friends with your culinary skills. So gather your ingredients, roll up your sleeves, and enjoy the journey of making this delicious comfort food that is sure to become a favorite in your home!

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key ingredients for an authentic Indian butter chicken recipe?

The key ingredients include chicken, butter, cream, tomato puree, garlic, ginger, and a blend of spices such as garam masala, cumin, and coriander.

How can I make butter chicken more flavorful?

To enhance the flavor, marinate the chicken in yogurt and spices overnight, and use fresh, high-quality ingredients, especially spices and tomatoes.

Is there a vegetarian version of butter chicken?

Yes, you can make a vegetarian version using paneer or tofu in place of chicken, and following a similar cooking method with the same sauce.

What type of chicken is best for butter chicken?

Skinless, boneless chicken thighs are recommended for butter chicken as they remain moist and tender during cooking.

Can I use canned tomatoes for butter chicken?

Yes, canned tomatoes can be used; however, for the best flavor, try to use whole peeled tomatoes or crushed tomatoes, preferably San Marzano variety.

How do I achieve the perfect creamy texture in my butter chicken sauce?

To achieve a creamy texture, use a combination of heavy cream and butter, and allow the sauce to simmer on low heat to meld the flavors.

What is the best way to serve butter chicken?

Butter chicken is best served hot with naan, roti, or steamed basmati rice, garnished with fresh cilantro for added flavor.

Can I make butter chicken ahead of time?

Yes, you can make butter chicken ahead of time. It often tastes even better the next day as the flavors develop. Just reheat gently before serving.

What sides pair well with butter chicken?

Sides that pair well with butter chicken include basmati rice, naan, cucumber raita, and a simple salad with yogurt dressing.

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